

# California Children and Families Commission

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## **Prop. 10 Commission Kicks Off First Phase of \$14 Million Statewide Public Education Campaign**

*Effort Emphasizes Parental Involvement During Child's Early Years and Warns that Smoking  
Can Cause Asthma and Birth Defects In Children; Information Hotline Included*

**SACRAMENTO** - The California Children and Families Commission, the agency charged with overseeing the implementation of Proposition 10, today unveiled a multi-million dollar advertising campaign on television, radio, billboards and in newspapers statewide. Produced in English and Spanish, the effort is designed to educate Californians about the importance of early childhood development and the dangers of smoking while pregnant and around children.

The campaign was unveiled before children and parents by State Commissioners at the Tot Town child care center in Sacramento. The Commissioners stressed that the advertisements were the cornerstone of a public education drive designed to provide Californians with essential information on the twin goals of Prop. 10, the successful 1998 initiative that placed a 50-cent-per-pack tax on cigarettes to fund early childhood development and anti-tobacco education programs statewide.

Entitled "It's All About the Kids," the campaign promotes a new 800-number that individuals can call to receive written information on how to make the most of a child's early years and how to stop smoking. In the longer term, the 800-number will serve as a link to local family and children resource services. **The number will be operational as of Tuesday, January 25.**

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“We are confident that the ads and toll-free number will get the attention of the parents, grandparents, caregivers and other adults who can have a tremendous positive influence on the lives of California children,” said Kim Belshé, a State Commissioner and the former Director of the California Department of Health Services. “Through our public education campaign, we want to instill in parents and caregivers the urgent need to participate in the development of children younger than five and alert them to the dangers of smoking while pregnant or around children.”

The first phase of the State Commission’s campaign consists of six television spots, three of which are in English, the others in Spanish. Subsequent phases of advertising will address other issues, such as accessing affordable health care and quality child care.

In addition to television, two 60-second English and two 60-second Spanish radio spots will run statewide, and three different outdoor advertisements—in English and Spanish—will be placed in larger markets, such as Los Angeles, San Diego, Sacramento, Fresno and the San Francisco Bay area. The education campaign also includes four newspaper ads, two of which will be placed in African American newspapers, and two in Spanish-language papers. Additional print and broadcast advertising is currently under development in several Asian languages and is scheduled to begin appearing in April.

“This issue cuts across ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic lines,” said Belshé, commenting on the scope of the education campaign, which is geared toward California’s diverse audiences.

One of the English- and Spanish-language television spots, titled “Cradle Me,” uses visuals of adults playing with and nurturing their children to convey the importance of early

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childhood development. A 30-second spot that will run statewide between January 25 and May 15, it emphasizes the relationship between adults and the children in their care, with the spot centering on how, “The first five years of a child’s life can impact the rest of their lives.”

“Between now and May, we will provide Californians with a steady stream of anti-tobacco and childhood development messages through a variety of mediums,” said Patty Siegel, a State Commissioner who is also executive director of the statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Network. “The ads not only break new ground by alerting the public to recent research linking smoking to birth defects, but also provide Californians with a resource to deploy when they are seeking greater information on raising their children.”

One of the advertisements shows a young boy peering out a window with an empty crib in the background. Upon inquiring about why his brother hasn’t come home yet from the hospital, the statement, “Smoking during pregnancy can cause birth defects,” is superimposed on the screen.

According to the California Birth Defects Monitoring Program, children born to mothers who smoked while pregnant have an increased risk of being born with an abnormal heart and have double the risk of developing cleft lips and cleft palates.

Another television spot, running in both English and Spanish, warns that, “Smoking around children can cause asthma.” In this spot, a young girl is seen apparently speaking to her mother, saying, “It’s scary when I can’t breathe.” As the camera pulls back, it is revealed that she is rehearsing in front of a mirror.

According to a 1998 Surgeon General’s report, smoking in the presence of children can

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cause upper respiratory problems, such as asthma and middle ear infections. In fact, between 7,500 and 15,000 cases of respiratory ailments caused by second hand smoke are serious enough for a child to be hospitalized, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The English television, radio and select outdoor advertisements were written and produced by the Los Angeles-based advertising firm, asher&partners. The Spanish-language pieces were created by asher&partners in conjunction with the advertising firm, Ad Américas. Runyon, Saltzman & Einhorn of Sacramento and asher&partners created the print and outdoor advertisements.

Prop. 10 is designed to create new services and expand existing programs to support children from the prenatal period to age five. Eighty percent of the revenues collected from the tax on cigarettes are distributed to volunteer County Commissions statewide based upon birth rate data. County Commissions develop strategic plans for spending the funds, but only after gathering extensive public input on local needs. The state has already transferred \$415 million in Prop. 10 revenues into local trust funds set up by the County Commissions so that money will be available as local commissions implement their strategic plans. Another \$83 million will be deposited into the local trust funds by the end of this month.

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